

Woman jogger found slain near Tilden Park trail

By Nancy Zubiri
and Harry Harris
The Tribune

ORINDA — A gentle, softspoken woman was found slain yesterday morning on a heavily used Tilden Park trail where she jogged regularly.

The body of Maria Weidhofer, 32, of Oakland was hidden in bushes off the scenic 4-mile Nimitz Way trail, which links Inspiration Point to an abandoned missile site. It is used by dozens of joggers, hikers and cyclists daily, and police said they will increase patrols in the area until they determine whether it was a random killing or whether the attacker knew the victim.

East Bay Regional Park District police refused to divulge details on how Weidhofer was killed.

The body was found about 8:30 a.m. yesterday by park officers, after friends reported she had not turned up for work Thursday at the Macrobiotic Center in Oakland. One of her housemates said Weidhofer went jogging almost daily, and usually alone, in the late morning or early afternoon.

Police were contacted after a concerned friend went to the Inspiration Point parking lot on Wildcat Canyon Road Thursday night and discovered her Toyota pickup was still parked there.

EBRPD acting Lt. Larry Kiefer said it appears Weidhofer was attacked about a mile down the trail, and then dragged into nearby bushes. Police would not give a motive for the attack, or say whether she may have known her killer.

Except for occasional cases of people exposing themselves to passers-by, Kiefer said he knew of no serious incidents on the popular park trail.

Weidhofer had been running almost every day for the past six months, and had been a jogger off and on for the past 10 years. Her friends and family described the 5-foot-5 inch woman as thin, but strong.

"She was the last person you



Maria Weidhofer
Jogger for 10 years

would think anything like this would happen to," said a co-worker, who asked not to be identified. "She was so quiet and shy. We're all really stunned."

Weidhofer, a vegetarian, lived in a macrobiotic collective with three other housemates. One housemate, Hawkins Mitchell, said Weidhofer was responsible for keeping the household running.

She had worked as a baker at the Macrobiotic Center for the past two years, but her mother, Jane Weidhofer, said she planned to look for a job in designing.

"She was very artistic," said her mother, adding she won departmental honors when she graduated from U.C. Davis with a bachelor's degree in art.

Weidhofer, daughter of a German immigrant, grew up in Claremont, in Southern California. She had lived in Oakland for the past two years. She is survived by her parents, Karl and Jane Weidhofer of Jackson, and two brothers, Rolf Weidhofer of Chico and Hans Weidhofer of Calaveras.

Police said they would be back at the park site this morning to search for more clues, and urge anyone who was there Thursday during the day to call Detective Sgt. Gretchen Fretter at 881-1833.

Clues sought in jogger's death

SUN NOV 18 1990

The Tribune

East Bay Regional Park District police yesterday continued their investigation of the murder of Marie Weidhofer, 32, of Oakland, whose body was found Friday morning in bushes off the Nimitz Way Trail in Tilden Park.

It is a heavily used trail on which Weidhofer jogged regularly, according to friends.

Police were contacted after a friend went to the Inspiration Point parking lot on Wildcat Canyon Road Thursday night and discovered Weidhofer's Toyota pickup still parked there.

Police yesterday also talked with people who were using the trail yesterday — joggers, hikers, bicyclists, people walking their dogs — in the hope that someone might have seen Weidhofer and/or her unknown assailant.

Officers will be in the area talking with people again today, Lt. Norm Lapera said.

Tilden trail jogger strangled by killer

MON NOV 19 1990

By Thomas York
The Tribune

East Bay Regional Park District police yesterday said that Marie Weidhofer, the 32-year-old Oakland woman whose body was found Friday morning in Tilden Regional Park, was strangled to death.

But investigators are saying little more about the case.

"No specific details about the condition of the victim at the time of her discovery are being released so as not to jeopardize the investigation," said spokesman Lt. Norm Lapera.

Police discovered her body after a friend found her truck

parked at the Inspiration Point parking lot on Wildcat Canyon Road Thursday night and summoned help. The friend became worried after she did not show up for work at the Oakland Macrobiotic Community Center.

Police said it appeared that she had been attacked about a mile down the trail and dragged into the bushes.

Over the weekend, police said they have talked with people who might have seen her along the trail, including joggers, bicyclists and hikers.

They refused to say if they have identified any suspects in the case.

Hawkins Mitchell, her roommate, said police have asked friends not to talk to the news media.

Her mother, Jane Weidhofer,

of Jackson, said her daughter was very private about her friends and acquaintances.

"She was not very open to us about the friends she had in Oakland," she said. "She was a private person."

Weidhofer had moved to Oakland from Southern California two years ago.

A jogger for the past 10 years, Weidhofer had been running regularly for the past six months. She usually jogged alone in the late morning or early afternoons, friends said.

Lapera said police are continue to look for witnesses who might have seen Weidhofer running on the trail on Thursday before she was killed.

He said the 5-foot 5-inch blond woman was wearing a blue shirt with mid-thigh length bicycling shorts. The shorts were an off-white color with a blue, orange, pink and purple print pattern.

Lapera said Weidhofer was driving a blue 1982 Toyota pickup with a white camper shell. She had parked her truck while she went jogging.

Anyone with information about Weidhofer is asked to call Detective Sgt. Gretchen Fretter at 881-1833.

No funeral services are planned, said her mother. She said her daughter's body "would be cremated and her ashes sprinkled over the Sierra Nevada where she liked to hike."

Police release sketch of man sought regarding Tilden murder

By Roland De Wolk
The Tribune

CASTRO VALLEY — Police said yesterday they want to talk to a man who may have been in the area of last Thursday's strangulation murder of Maria Weidhofer whose body was found near a well-used jogging trail in Tilden Park.

At a press conference yesterday at district headquarters, East Bay Regional Park District Police Lt. Norman Lopera said the man is not necessarily a suspect, but investigators have been told by several people who were near the murder scene that a man fitting that description was also in the area.

Weidhofer's body was found about a mile along the Nimitz Way trail out from Inspiration Point. The attack is believed to have occurred between 10:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. last Thursday, Lopera said.

Investigators yesterday released a composite drawing of the man. He is described as a white male, about 5 feet 8 inches to 5 feet 10 inches tall, with a "trim/agile build, black hair (and) clean-cut looking."

He was last seen wearing a black and white plaid shirt and dark pants.

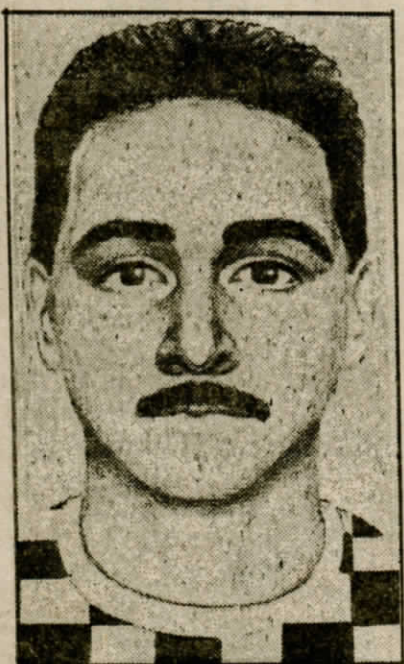
The man was memorable, Lopera said yesterday, because he was dressed in street clothes instead of an exercise outfit and was seen hanging around rather than running or walking.

The 32-year-old victim, an Oakland resident, was a regular jogger along the trail that is popular with joggers, walkers and bicyclists. When she failed to return home and to her baking job, friends searched for her and found only her car.

Berkeley Police were alerted late Thursday night. On Friday morning they found her body in the bushes nearby.

Since then, police have declined to divulge details of their investigation.

Anyone with any information was asked to contact East Bay Regional Park police at 881-1833.



Man wanted for questioning
Spotted near crime scene

Authorities discount idea of serial killer

WED NOV 28 1990

By Laura Myers
The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The FBI and police in several cities on Monday discounted speculation that a serial killer is responsible for the recent slayings and disappearances of several women in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Authorities said the only link between a half dozen crimes under investigation is that the cases remain unsolved, involve women and lack strong leads amid sometimes mysterious circumstances.

One woman who disappeared, Donna Oh, was found Monday in Salt Lake City. Details surrounding her disappearance were unclear late Monday, but an FBI

supervisor confirmed she had been found in Salt Lake City and was OK.

"The cases are so dissimilar when you look at... the victims, environment, method of killing, that we don't believe they can be linked," said Lt. Norman Lapera of the East Bay Regional Park District police.

Lapera is investigating the murder of Maria Wiedhofer, 32, of Oakland, a jogger who was found strangled Nov. 16 along a popular trail in Tilden Park in Berkeley. No witnesses have come forward, although police believe she was killed during the day on or near the popular trail.

In other unsolved cases:

■ On Oct. 17, a woman's mutilated torso was found stuffed in

a burlap sack floating near the Oakland Estuary. The body hasn't been identified.

■ The badly beaten and stabbed body of Nancy Jane Hopkins-Mayes, 38, of Oakland, was found Nov. 10 floating in the Bay off Albany. Police say she was bound and stabbed at least 100 times.

■ Several women, including some prostitutes, have been found shot to death in Oakland, but Lt. Mike Sims said he believes authorities have a good idea who might have committed those separate, possibly drug-related crimes.

■ In July, Barbara Lang, 48, was found strangled to death in her Oakland hills home.

Berkeley police were stumped

by Oh's disappearance Nov. 2. The 35-year-old woman was last heard from when she called one of her two daughters to report her car had broken down on the way to the movies.

Berkeley police Capt. Philip Duran said authorities initially looked at the other Eastbay murders to see if there were any similarities with Oh's disappearance, but didn't come up with anything.

"We don't believe there's any relationship between any of them," he said.

The FBI was called in to help with the Oh case because it was believed to involve kidnapping, and FBI spokesman Duke Diedrich said agents also reviewed the other East Bay cases.

Serial killer preying on women

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The FBI was called in to help with the Oh case because it was believed to involve kidnapping, and FBI spokesman Duke Diedrich said agents also reviewed the other East Bay cases.

"At this point, we just don't see any connections," Diedrich said. "In most serial killer cases, the same murder methods are used and there are other similarities. Not in these cases."

Lapera, with the Eastbay park police, said speculation often starts about serial killers when women victims are involved "who aren't high risk," such as prostitutes or hitch hikers or drug users.

"Let's be honest — six homicides don't sell as well as the belief that there's some serial killer," he said. "But that just is fanning the fire of hysteria, saying 'Hey, there's a Ted Bundy out there.'"

Oakland police Lt. Sims said

the city has enough troubles keeping up with a record murder rate of 155 homicides so far in 1990 compared to 148 last year.

"We've had more than our fair share of murders, but they're mostly isolated incidents," Sims said. "We don't need a serial killer around here."

The police agencies involved said they are in constant contact with each other to spot any links that could show up in the cases.

Meanwhile, initial community fear seems to have dissipated a bit, at least for some.

"People generally feel uneasy, but it's not that bad," said Tilly Chang, a junior at the University of California at Berkeley. "The events seem random, though. I don't know if that's good or bad."

Truck linked to man sought in park slaying

THU NOV 29 1990
Investigators from the East Bay Regional Park District yesterday said a man wanted for questioning in the Nov. 16 slaying of Maria Weidhofer may have been driving a brown Toyota pickup truck.

The truck, a late 1970 or early '80s model, has a white camper shell with elongated sliding windows and small round windows on both sides of the shell. The round windows may have a design on them, investigators said.

Witnesses reported seeing the truck in the area the day of the slaying and the day before.

Weidhofer, 32, an Oakland resident, was killed while she jogged along a trail in Tilden Park in Berkeley.

Anyone with information is asked to call detectives Gretchen Fretter or Jack Pelletier at 881-1833.

Reward offered in Tilden murder case

WED FEB 27 1991
Authorities are offering a \$5,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or people responsible for the death of an Oakland woman who was found strangled Nov. 16 on a jogging trail in Tilden Park.

Maria Weidhofer 32, was killed while she ran on a well-used trail in the park about a mile north of Inspiration Point.

East Bay Regional Park District investigators say that a man seen in the vicinity of the crime on Nov. 15 may know about the murder. He is described as white, about 5-feet 8-inches tall with a trim, agile build and black hair.

Anyone with information is asked to call Sgt. Laurence Kiefer or Officer Jack Pelletier at 881-1833.

